

**Proposed Rule for the 2017 Spring/Summer
Alaska Subsistence Migratory Bird Harvest**
Questions and Answers

1. What changes are being made?

- a. Opening cackling Canada geese to egg gathering on the Yukon/Kuskokwim Delta
- b. Opening emperor geese to hunting and egg gathering
- c. Opening barrier islands for the Cordova subsistence bird hunt and add residents of Tatitlek and Chenega Bay to the list of those eligible to participate in the spring/summer subsistence bird hunt
- d. Amend harvest dates for the Northwest Arctic Region

2. Why has the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) made these changes?

Annually, the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-management Council (Co-Management Council) requests proposals to change the federal spring/summer migratory bird harvest regulations. Proposed changes received in 2016 were reviewed by the Co-Management Council and after considerable discussion and some modifications, the Council voted to support each of the changes for the 2017 season.

3. What is the process to develop and approve proposed regulation changes?

The process to change the federal subsistence migratory bird harvest regulations occurs annually. It begins with a call for proposals. Proposals received are discussed by the Co-Management Council and may be adopted, rejected, or modified to address conservation concerns. Members of the Co-Management Council include a representative from the USFWS, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), and ten tribal representatives. An Environmental Assessment is written for the proposed regulation changes. The Co-management Council's proposed changes are presented to the Pacific Flyway Council and to the USFWS's Regulations Committee. Any proposed regulation changes adopted by the Co-Management Council are then recommended to the USFWS Director. This proposed rule has been approved by the Director of the USFWS.

4. How does the USFWS ensure that healthy migratory bird populations are maintained?

The USFWS will work with the Co-Management Council and the ADF&G to meet the recommendations for reporting harvest through the harvest assessment program. This will include outreach and education programs to inform rural Alaska residents and hunters about the new regulations, harvest guidelines, and need to hunt conservatively to maintain healthy populations.

5. Why has the USFWS proposed to open the Emperor Goose subsistence hunting season?

For the past 30 years, Tribal governments in Alaska have collaborated with Federal and State agencies to provide for the self-renewal of the emperor goose population from a significant population decline in the late 1980s. The conservation effort included hunting closures and the practice of indigenous stewardship, resulting in an increased population. The minimum

population threshold has been met, and subsistence and sport harvest opportunity could be resumed.

6. How was the proposed Emperor Goose regulation change developed?

The Co-Management Council formed a subcommittee in response to several regulatory proposals submitted since 2012 to open the emperor goose hunt. The subcommittee was made up of USFWS and ADF&G biologists and statisticians, and Tribal representatives from the emperor goose range. The subcommittee collaboratively wrote the Emperor Goose Management Plan, the first of its kind for the Co-Management Council. The goals of this plan are to ensure sustainable harvest and maintain key ecological functions throughout the range of emperor geese.

7. How will the USFWS ensure that a healthy emperor goose population is maintained?

The USFWS will implement the harvest strategy in the Pacific Flyway Council and Co-management Council's Emperor Goose Management Plans. The parties to the Emperor Goose Management Plan agree that continued cooperation is essential to achieve the stated goal and to maintain the population size at levels that provide for harvest and non-consumptive uses (educational, recreational, scientific). Outreach and education programs will be implemented to inform rural Alaska residents and hunters about the new regulations, harvest guidelines, and the importance of conservation to maintain healthy populations. Emperor goose conservation will be shared equitably throughout the species' range. Harvest restrictions or closures of both hunts (spring-summer and fall-winter) will be considered when the number of birds falls below a certain threshold identified in the management plans.